DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 713 CS 504 390

AUTHOR Chandler, Daniel Ross
TITLE Henry Ward Beecher: A Nation's Tribune.
PUB DATE Jun 83
NOTE 44p.; Paper presented at the Gettysburg Conference on Rhetorical Transactions in the Civil War Era (Gettysburg, PA, June 24-25, 1983).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Christianity; Clergy; Communication Research; *Communication Skills; *Persuasive Discourse; Philosophy; Public Speaking; *Religion; *Rhetoric; United States History
IDENTIFIERS *Beecher (Henry Ward); *Nineteenth Century History; Transcendentalism

ABSTRACT

Henry Ward Beecher was America's most prominent 19th century liberal preacher and a major spokesperson for New England Transcendentalism. His philosophy integrated four fundamental themes: the creation of a moral code based on the internalization of values and peer group pressures, the establishment of the reform ideal of the impartial nonpartisan public critic, the emphasis upon reaching the "common man" through mass communication, and the adherence to a naturalistic Christianity that made religion a matter of common sense for the American believer. As a powerful and eloquent lecturer beyond his Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York, Beecher championed free inquiry, explaining that knowledge about God is gained through humanity's moral experiences and historical developments. He gained fame, not only through his dramatic speaking tours in England and Scotland during the American Civil War, but also by supporting President Lincoln and emancipation, establishing the Republican party, and delivering the principal address when the American flag was returned in victory to fly above Fort Sumpter. Although born during an era pervaded with Calvanism, hell, and eternal punishment, Beecher died a believer in evolution. By preaching of God as a compassionate father, he freed the minds of men and women from their bondage to the Puritan God of fear, and by exerting persistent pressure upon American culture, he made religious principles pragmatic practices. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED236713

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
[X] This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
[ ] Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Daniel Rose Chandler
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Henry Ward Beecher: A Nation's Tribune

Daniel Ross Chandler

"Henry Ward Beecher," said Robert G. Ingersoll, "was born in a Puritan penitentiary, on which his father was one of the wardens - a prison with very narrow and closely grated windows."[1] Specifically, Beecher war born on June 24, 1813, in Litchfield, Connecticut, the son of a famous Calvinist preacher who raised his children in the strict colonial Puritan style. The year when Henry was born was the year when Lyman Beecher preached one of his most popular and enduring sermons, an attack upon Unitarian rationalism, "The Faith Once Delivered to the Saints."

Henry's grandfathers were blacksmiths who smote their anvils, unknowing that Lyman's son would forge a genuine contribution to American religion. Litchfield, one of the oldest and most prosperous Connecticut communities, was a town tightly organized by persuasive leaders who assured that religious beliefs were uniform and that social control was strict. Beecher's household was enlivened with fierce theological discussions, especially when churchmen argued fine-points within the listening ranges of big-eyed children.[2] When Henry reached eight, according to Hibben, the youth knew more about decrees, foreordination, election, reprobation, and eternal damnation than most seminarians.[3]

From boyhood, Henry enjoyed nature. Barrows wrote that "the clouds and the elms, the birds and the ponds and the trout-streams found Henry a good scholar. He knew where to see the squirrels and find the sweet flag, the sassafras bushes, the chestnuts, and the hickories."[4] Tramping through the woodlands or beside a brook,

CS 504390

> he gained a deep insight into the beautiful and, to so many eyes, hidden mysteries of nature, which was a never-failing source of comfort and pleasure to him through all his life - a rich treasury, from which he drew so much of that illustrative imagery which illuminated and beautified his writings and speeches....Nature was to him God's book wide open, each leaf free and unbound, filled with that which comforted his soul and confirmed his faith.5

During Henry's later years, these "pantheistic tendencies" agitated some churchmen who attempted to prove that Beecher was a pagan.[6] But Henry's response to Nature's beauty remained strong throughout his event-filled ministry:

> Out of doors, among the trees and the birds and the flowers and the rabbits and grasshoppers, with sunset and the eternal hills, it seemed quite silly that God should elect John Smith and Mary Jones and a few others - all of course resident in New England and members of the Congregational Church in good standing - to be saved, and damn the rest.7

The great Unitarian controversy was raging in New England as the historic churches in Eastern Massachusetts became split among competing contengencies. Harvard College had fallen to the Unitarians, and growing infidelity assumed organizational structure in the American Unitarian Association in 1825. So Lyman Beecher departed his Litchfield parsonage and moved to historic Boston, determined to defend "the faith of the fathers." In Boston, young Henry enjoyed watching ships sailing the harbor, sniffing fresh sea-air, and wandering about the wharves. However Henry felt constrained:

> From the untrammeled freedom of his country life where the woods and fields were his play-grounds, the birds and forest-creatures his mates, to be suddenly compressed and limited to brick walls and narrow streets excited a depressing influence on his mind that increased the melencholy to which he had been prone from childhood.8

Nevertheless Henry discovered that the sea seemed a gateway to freedom, a "way out of all the loneliness and ugliness of the repressed type of spiritual life that hemmed him in."

Some scholars subsequently described Henry was intellectually dull simply

because the youth seemed deficient in memory, painfully sensitive, and affected with a speech impediment. Persuading Henry to speak before an audience was not a simple task for his teachers, who provided a meager, formal education.

> Aside from the rude teachings of a country school, Henry learned all he knew of books - until he entered Amherst College in 1830, when he was seventeen years old - in a private school in the town of Bethlehem, where instruction amounted to little more than a permit to swim in the brooks and romp in the fields, and in his sisters' school in Hartford, where there were forty girls and no other boy beside himself.10

When Henry completed prepatory schooling, Beecher reportedly sent his son to Amherst because the clergyman believed that his son's emotional instability required a smaller school and because Lyman doubted that Henry was bright enough for Yale.[11]

Theological controversy persisted in New England during Henry's undergraduate days. During his final two years at Amherst, he was especially sympathetic with his father's criticisms denouncing Boston Unitarianism. One result from Lyman's battles, and the father's later heresy trial on the western frontier, was that heresy-hunting filled Henry with disgust and contempt. "Good men," Barrows said, "fired with a mistaken zeal for the Lord, shooting their arrows at Christian brethren, filled him with a lifelong disgust."[12] Through Henry's subsequent ministry, his conviction deepened that the church is mercilessly crucified upon the cross of a foolish and fanatical devotion to ecclesiastical system and theological bickering. While Henry was studying at Amherst, Lyman moved from Boston to Cincinnati, where he assumed the presidency of Lane Theological Seminary; following his graduation, Henry entered Lane planning to complete his ministerial education under his father's instruction.[13] Neither Lyman Beecher's scholarship nor the seminary curriculum, but a profound personal religious experience, determined Henry's theology and the course of his ministerial career. Henry described how he was walking near Lane

Seminary when:

> That instant the clouds rose, and the whole heaven was radiant, and I exclaimed, "I have found God." It was the first time I had found him. Good, his name was; and I went like one crazed up and down through the fields, half laughing, singing and praying and shouting like a good Methodist.[14]

Beecher's spiritual experience links him directly with New England Transcendentalism, the "heresy" that sprang directly fron rationalistic Unitarianism.

However Beecher's rhetorical education at Amherst provided an essential discipline that made Henry's preaching the most powerful expression of Transcendental philosophy. Henry's early studies in rhetoric were appreciated by Abbott and Halliday: "That a youth so eminently unfitted by nature to be an orator should have become subsequently one of the greatest of modern orators, argues an application to the study of oratory, and a determination to overcome its difficulties."[15] John E. Lovell, an elocution teacher, provided invaluable training in speechmaking.[16] During these days at Amherst, Beecher excelled in the forensic activities of the Athenian Society, a fraternity established in 1821, in which Henry served as a librarian, orator, and eventually president.[17]

Nature, rhetoric, and literature enriched Henry's educational experience. Barrows considered as one of the chief events happening during his educational preparation was his reading Spenser, Shakespeare, Daniel, and Milton.[18] Clark mentioned that the boy enjoyed reading such German romantic poets as Jacobi, Goethe, and Lessing; that Henry studied such English romantics as Wordsworth, Burns, Coleridge, and Scott; and that he compared the German poets with the New England Transcendentalists.[19] Beecher biographers reported: "Not only has he been a student of the Greek and Latin classic authors and of English Literature, but the whole range of literature comes within his horizon."[20] Beecher enjoyed browsing through bookstores and libraries, and one source suggests that he read not primarily to acquire information but to stimulate throught.[21]

Following graduation, Henry accepted his first pastorate in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, during 1837. Henry married Eunice White Bullard, a Massachusetts girl to whom he became engaged during his Amherst days. The first of their ten children was born in Lawrenceburg, where they struggled financially in near poverty. In 1839, however, Beecher became minister of the Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, where he secured growing popularity was a revival preacher and a newspaper writer. Clark concluded that during his Indianapolis ministry, Beecher had integrated four fundamental themes in his Victorian cultural ethos: the creation of a moral code based on the internalization of values and peer-group pressures; the establishment of the reform ideal of the impartial, nonpartisan public critic; the emphasis upon reaching the "common man" through mass communication; and a naturalistic Christianity that made religion a natter of common sense for the American believer. Seemingly conservative, Beecher, during his Indianapolis ministry, denounced the theater, the circus, card-playing, dancing halls, boxing, and a town prostitute; men were expelled from Beecher's congregation for gambling and drinking.[23] Gaining recognition as a public speaker, Henry was invited to speak at Wabash College about education, at Indiana University on intolerance, and at Laporte on professional training.[24] Within three years, the Second Presbyterian Church had become the largest in Indiana; and Beecher's seven lectures to young men, which were delivered during 1843, attracted considerable attention.[25] Abbott considered these lectures Beecher's most distinctive and permanent Indiana accomplishment.[26] Indeed, Beecher's popular Lectures to Young Men might have been the first book by an Indiana author that became republished in Great Britian.[27]

Beecher lived and preached in these lusty Middlewestern communities during

his twenties and thirties. From these formative experiences, he developed an earthiness from his contacts with the Hoosierized Yankees in whom the strength of New England became mingled with the fervor of the South. Barrows concluded that Beecher eventually became the most national or continential preacher in his sympathies and sensitivity because he carried Eastward the liberal cathol c spirit generally prevalent among the Christian denominations on the Western frontier.[28] When Henry moved East, he enraged some clergyman when his methods were considered as a virtual rebuke of their laziness, antagonied the mercantile leaders who accused him of damaging their trade, and frustrated several politicians with his social activism.[29]

Beecher's Eastward movement was facilitated du[illegible]ng the spring, 1847, when he accepted an invitation to address an anniversary [illegible]eting of the American Home Missionary Society in New York. Reports indivate that he refused calls from two prominent Boston churches befor accepting an invitation to serve Plymouth Church, a Congregational church in Brooklyn, where he ministered for forty years.[30] On Sunday evening, June 13, 1847, Plymouth Church was organized with a membership consisting of twenty-one persons; and the following day, Beecher was unanimously chosen to become the pastor. Abbott reported that Beecher was radical, the members were radical, and the church in its Congregationalism was radical.[31] The church's theology seemed consistent with the New School Presbyterian Church and the New England theology of the orthodox Congregational churches of the mid-nineteenth century. But Beecher was an attraction to his audience:

> They were startled by their new young preacher who looked like a western farmer in his loose coat and low collar, who flung a broad hat on a table when he ascended the platform, who had shouted defiantly at the outset that he would wear no fetters and be bound by no precedent.[32]

On January 13, 1849, a fire engulfed Brooklyn Heights and destroyed Beecher's church, prompting the congregation to construct a new building to accommodate a growing congregation that numbered between two and three thousand. The new structure was completed in January, 1850, at a cost of thirty-six thousand dollars.[33] The new edifice emphasized preaching when the pulpit was placed in the midst of the congregation so that Beecher was front-and-center, not concealed in a "sparrow's nest" along the wall."[34] In May, 1850, Beecher learned that Wendell Phillips had been barred from speaking in New York City; the Brooklyn minister, who disagreed with Phillips' views, invited him to speak at Plymouth Church and introduced him to the audience.[35] Within three years following Henry's departure from Indiana, his congregation had grown from twenty-one to three-hundred and forty-three members, while Henry's salary was four times his Indianapolis salary.[36] At the end of ten years, the church membership reached twelve-hundred and forty-one.[37] In 1862, the converted members of Beecher's congregation numbered one thousand, four hundred, and sixty; during the following ten years the congregation almost doubled by adding one thousand, sixty-eight members.[38] When Plymouth Church celebrated a semi-centennial during 1897, a report indicated that thirty-six hundred and thirty-three persons had entered the Kingdom through Plymouth Church, an average of approximately seventy-two annually.39

Beyond his church, Beecher grew popular as a lecturer. By 1855 Henry was delivering fifty public addresses annually, and thereafter he averaged more than one hundred each year until his death.[40] Beginning on April 18, 1875, and continuing each year until February, 1887, Beecher traveled nearly three hundred thousand miles on lecture tours with Major Pond, speaking twelve hundred and sixty-one times.[41] On one lecture tour alone, Beecher reportedly delivered seventy-

five lectures, preached sixteen sermons, and travelled seventeen thousand miles.[42] In the nine months between September, 1876, and June, 1877, Beecher traveled more than twenty-seven thousand miles and visited eighteen States and Canada.[43] Pond, who managed Beecher's lectures for fifteen years, indicated that the Brooklyn preacher delivered an average of a hundred and fifty lectures a year, and that during some seasons Beecher lectured upwards to two hundred and fifty times, besides preaching every Sunday.[44] Barrows maintained that the popular preacher addressed larger audiences with greater pecuniary rewards than any other speaker.[45] Beecher communicated with a growing national audience estimated in the millions.[46] Clark reported that Beecher sometimes earned a thousand dollars from a single lecture and as much as four thousand dollars during a ten day lecture-trip; when proceeds from his lectures were added to his twenty thousand dollar salary, Beecher became the nation's highest paid clergyman.[47] Beecher's published works outbulked Shakespeare's ten times over.[48]

Beecher's enormous, enduring popularity is attributed to the powerful, eloquent preaching that made the Brooklyn minister America's greatest nineteenth-century religious liberal. Beecher's preaching enthralled multitudes who sat spellbound and enraptured. Another prominent liberal minister, Frank W. Gunsaulus, called Beecher's speaking an effuence stemming from his entire nature and claimed that "the effect upon a discriminating hearer was that of a total character - a character totalized by fiery courage, making his eloquence opalesant because its fire was revealed everywhere."[49] A long-time Plymouth Church member stated: "The testimonies of conscience, hope, adoration and affection he put into thr loom of his wonderful imaginiation and wove them into the fabrics of great epic and lyric prose-poems."[50] Again Abbott was perceptive in describing Beecher:

> The spontaneity of his character, his unconventionalism, his serene disregard of traditions of every kind, would have made it impossible for him to express his devotional spirit in the words selected for or imposed upon him by others....His vivid imagination, redundant rhetoric, and dramatic personification of every character he wished to portray, his musical voice, capable of every intonation, from thunder of indignation to gentlest and softest note of invitation and, behind all, his absolute freedom from cant and every suspecion of professionalism, gave him unexampled power in the pulpit.51

Abbott's comment remains insightful: "He formws himself on no mould, - indeed, I am inclined to think that he did not consciously mould himself at all, - he grew."[52] Beecher's preaching was a sincere and simple expression of himself, yet as magnificently enchanting as a surging, sweeping sea:

> It seemed at times as if all the powers of the great organ had been concentrated into a living man, through whom spake the living God, now uttering his voice in homelike familiarity, and then with the trumpet's most piercing and passionate notes, now with the plaintiveness of a child's pleading cry and anon with a Miltonic sweep and grandeur of sound, like the thunderous music of the ocean shore.53

Barrows maintained that Beecher followed the spirit that led him across many stormy seas into new continets of truth, and that truth seemed to Beecher not as something completed and perfectly revealed but as something still to be attained.[54] Clark suggested that Beecher style seemed conversational and comprehensible.[55] And another distinguished liberal minister described Beecher's preaching:

> Mr. Beecher's eloquence was like the fluency of the Atlantic - a constant motion, a mysterious depth, an infinite caress or an infinite assault. Of our sainted friend it may be truly said that his thoughts were greater than his language. Every word had its own tint of intellectual beauty; every sentence its own freight of rich meaning; every sermon its gallery of pictures or its galaxy of stars....
>
> He said in effect that in the universe of Truth horizon beyond horizon stretches in unimaginable range and splendor, constellation above constellation burns in solemn glory, and system within system rolls in silent light, compared with whose magnificence all that we know of day and summer is but a mitigation of darkness.56

With powerful expression, Beecher espoused a distinctive liberal religion Beecher championed free inquiry and sought new truths. "a man," he recognized,

"might frame and let loose a star to roll in its orbit, and yet not have done so memorable a thing before God as he who lets go a golden-orbed thought to roll through the generations of time."[57] Living sparks scattered from a hunter's pipe might kindle raging flames sweeping across the countryside, just as a single thought might enlighten a superstitious generation and change historical development. When scientific research from geological exploration, archeological investigation, and biblical scholarship suggested new truths, Beecher encouraged the seekers and the searchers:

> The noble body of investigators who are deciphering the hieroglyphics of God inscribed upon this temple of the earth are to be honored and encouraged. As it is now, vaguely bigoted theologists, ignorant pietists, jealous churchmen, unintelligent men, whose very existence seems like a sarcasm upon creative wisdom, with leaden wit and stinging irony swarm about the adventurous surveyors who are searching God's handiwork and who have added to the realm of the knowledge of God the grandest treasures.58

Beecher explained that knowledge about God is gained through humanity's moral experiences and historical development. Homo sapiens fashion a conception about God from knowledge about certain admirable moral qualities, just as every human creates a conception about a God whose entire nature eludes comprehension:

> But men cut and hew till they have shaped their own fancies out of God's timber, and then they get upon them like judgment-day thrones, and call all the world to answer at their feet for heresies against their idols. There are few heresies in the world more real than the very idea of an abstract doctrine presented as God's truth.59

Skepticism from honest humans unfolds growing truth.

> Every man should use his intellect, not as those who study in their libraries, when all the world is asleep, use their lamps, for their own seeing only; but as light-houses use their lanterns, that those who are far off upon the deep may see the shining, and learn their way.60

Beecher appreciated the silent thinkers who achieve an immortality through thought. "The great men of earth," he professed,

> are the shadowy men, who, having lived and died, now live again and forever through their undying thoughts. Thus living, though their footfalls are heard no more, their voices are louder than the thunder, and unceasing as the flow of tides or air.61

Belief about thought's immortality was accompanied with conviction about truth's inevitable triumph:

> The truth may change its form; it may be hid for years and generations; but, as the old wheat-seeds, wrapped in the mummies of Egypt, now, after ages, sought out by prying travellers and planted, are found not to have lost their germ, but to have kept it through the sleep of three thousand years, so God's truth, hid in dead forms and institutions, slumbering in the rags of the vulgar, so at length come forth.62

As significant as the immortality of through is the triumph of truth; however these are subordinated beneath love, which constitutes Beecher's fundamental value. "Love, amid the other graces in this world," he avowed,

> is like a cathedral tower, which begins on the earth, and at first is surrounded by the other parts of the structure; but, at length, rising above buttressed wall, and arch, and parapet, and pinnacle, it shoots spire-like many a foot right into the air, so high that the huge cross on its summit glows like a spark in the morning light, and shines like a star in the evening sky, when the rest of the pile is enveloped in darkness. So Love, here, is surrounded by the other graces, and divides the honors with them; but they will have felt the wrap of night and of darkness when it will shine, luminous, against the sky of eternity.63

Although seemed initially reluctant to oppose slavery partly because his methods were more restrained than the radical abolitionists, he eventually fought slavery and encouraged disobedience to the fugitative slave law. When civil war threatened and the Blue and the Gray emerged as determined camps, the Brooklyn preacher denounced slavery and urged vigorous military intervention. Abbott carefully explained that Beecher was not an abolitionist but an anti-slavery advocate, and that Beecher's opposition against slavery stemed from his primary profession as a preacher.[64] The spirited spokesman contended that freedom's cause was served best by preserving the Union, supporting the Constitution, treating slaves and slave-owners as brethren, and employing political power to

prevent slavery from spreading. He believed that dormant Northern feelings against slavery could be aroused by inviting Northerners to emancipate individual slaves; hence freedom for several slaves was secured by auctions conducted in Plymouth Church. There was a time during the civil war, Rourke wrote, when "Beecher was moved by an almost mystical sense of the unity of the country, that consciousness of the whole continent which in many minds had grown so great with the surge of the movement westward."[65] Beecher's well known Star paper, "Shall We Compromise?," became a seminal statement summarizing his position when that document appeared on February 21, 1850. A sermon preached on April 14, 1861, during the seige on Fort Sumpter, was circulated widely and read from many pulpits. When Henry Whitney Bellows, the leading New York Unitarian minister, responded to Northern military reverses by advocating a governmental seizeure by an upper-class oligarchy, Beecher maintained his faith that democratic government would succeed even under faulty national leadership. Compassionate, Beecher argued that Northern feelings should never be vengeful or savage, and that a genuine Christian spirit should motivate his countrymen struggling through their tremendous sectional conflicts.[67]

Beecher's most dramatic service to his nation, and perhaps the crowing achievement during his famous preaching ministry, was a personal speaking tour conducted through Great Britain during 1863.[68] During a year when battles flared at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, the Brooklyn attempted a remarkable mission that some regarded as the most significant diplomatic effort in Europe since Franklin represented the Republic at Versailles. Rhetorical studies confirm that Beecher delivered one speech that was divided into five specific segments that were delivered at Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburg, Liverpool, and London. Some agreed

Barrows' estimate that these five addresses constituted "the greatest speech of the nineteenth century."[69] Stirred by mistaken assumptions about Beecher's mission and motivation, organized gangs infiltrated some English audiences and deliberately provokes antagonism; sometimes approbation made the hostile audiences seem unapproachable.[70] Traveling as a private citizen and supported by Plymouth Church, Beecher encountered angered audiences in Manchester and Liverpool, and enthusiastic welcome at London and in Scotland.[71] Beecher made no immediate estimate about the significance or effectiveness of these speeches, but he believed that Grant's victory at Vicksburg and Lee's defeat at Gettysburg prepared English audiences to receive these addresses.[72] Clark concluded that Union military successes during the summer, not Beecher's speeches, convinced Englishmen not to side with Southerners and intervene in the civil war.[73] Nevertheles when Beecher's addresses were delivered to English audiences against a brillant backdrop provided by the civil war, the effect prompted some enthusiastic supporters to conclude that Beecher's speeches deserve recognition among the world's greatest oratorical attainments.[74]

Between July 24, and October 1, 1886, Beecher, responding to Major Pond's urging, conducted a fifteen and a half lecture tour of Great Britian, during which the famous American orator received considerable acclaim. Beecher presented seventeen sermons, fifty-eight-lectures, and nine public addresses.

Beside Beecher's dramatic speaking tours through English and Scottish cities during the civil war, the eloquent clergyman gained fame by supporting Abraham Lincoln, establishing the Republican Party, and delivering the principal address when the American flag was returned in victory above Fort Sumpter.

Several imaginative legends surround Abraham Lincoln's association with Plymouth Church and her beloved pastor. Evidence indicates that Lincoln was scheduled to speak at Plymouth Church but his address was transferred to Cooper Union when the Illinois leader visited New York in 1860.[76] Abbott explained that Lincoln's address on February 27, 1860, secured Lincoln's presidential nomination and became the political platform for the emergent Republican Party.[77] Lincoln's speech, moved to Cooper Union to accommodate an anticipated audience, "represented what Mr. Beecher had for ten years urged his fellow citizens to incorporate in a national resolve and embody in national action."[78] Besides presenting an historic address at Cooper Union, Lincoln visited Plymouth Church during his New York engagement.[79] From that eventful association, two rumors developed: that an enduring friendship commenced between Lincoln and Beecher and that the Brooklyn preacher was influential upon the federal government.[80]

Associating with journalists, intellectuals, and businessmen and attempting to improve corrupt political practices, Beecher and his colleagues created the Republican Party.[81] Entering into political discissions about anti-slavery tactics, Beecher became involved in formulating a reform philosophy when the preacher "helped implant the secular ideals of romantic Christianity within the ideology of the Republican Party."[82] Case concluded that the influence exerted by romantic Christianity upon society came not primarily from the churches but through the "secularization of religious ideals and their incorporation into popular morality."[83] And Rourke maintained the Beecher's political participation revived and strengthened the New England tradition by which ministers criticized governmental policies and representatives without receiving allegations charging them with violating constitutional separations between the church and the state.[84]

Another dramatic highlight crowning Beecher's eventful career happened on April 14, 1865, when Major General Anderson raised above the battered ramparts of Fort Sumpter the same American flag that had been lowered on April 14, 1861. Although Beecher was the principal speaker, the "raising the flag was itself indefinitely more eloquent than any words that even Mr. Beecher could utter."[85] Nevertheless from among persons eminently qualified to espouse the nation's sentiment, Beecher was selected appropriately to announced a nation's "second birth." Following the surrender of Charleston, Beecher was designated by Lincoln to speak on that special April day. One report indicates that Lincoln, having read Beecher's five speeches delivered in Great Britian, told his cabinet that, if the war efforts proved successful, Beecher should raise the flag at Sumpter because without the Brooklyn orator there might be no flag to unfurl.[86] Asked toward the war's conclusion whom he considered the greatest among his countrymen, Lincoln reportedly named Beecher.[87] In an appropriate dispensation of "malice toward none," Beecher encourage the prompt reestablishment of fraternal relations between the North and the South, the rapid cessation of military government, and the earliest possible establishment of civil authority.

Barrows stated that the period of greatest prosperity for Plymouth Church was perhaps the twelve years following the civil war and that the culminating event in Beecher's prominent ministry was probably the "Silver Anniversary" during the week of Jubilee, in October, 1872.

Throughout his ministry, Beecher remained a leader within the liberal religious movement. The Brooklyn preacher sustained his formal ecclesiastical connection with the orthodox Congregational church and his warm personal association with several liberal ministers. Criticism of Beecher's theology, however, prompted

the popular preacher's withdrawal from the local Congregational ministers' association. In October, 1882, Beecher relinquished his membership, hoping to dispel any mistaken assumption that any of his professional colleagues entertained any of Beecher's alleged heresies! Beecher remained a Congregationalist in good standing until his death in 1887 and sustained his ministerial membership in the state association. Beecher's withdrawal from the Brooklyn association represented a personal response to concerted cries from neighborhood clergy who sounded an alarm against Beechers sacrilegious sallies and blatant blasphemies.[90]

Unfortunately Beecher's rightful reputation and religious contribution became clouded with a sensational sexual immorality trial during which the sixty-one year old minister was charged and cleared of making improper advances. With passing years, this sensational trial that shook an entire generation becomes confined within its appropriate perspective. Hibben is correct when he concluded that when the social history for Beecher's generation becomes recorded, the case may be described as clearing the intellectual ground and freeing the human mind from historical clutter than any other esisode.[91] The prolonged travesty commenced when Elizabeth Tilton informed her husband that she committed adultry with Beecher in 1970. Beecher denied the rumors during 1873. A committee containing six members from Plymouth Church investigated Theodore Tilton's charge against Beecher, and they cleared Beecher of charges of immorality. In 1874, Tilton filed a complaint against Beecher, and the resultant six-month trial in 1875 resulted and a jury's vote of nine to three favoring Beecher. On Febryary 15, 1876, an advisory council consisting of two-hundred and thirty-seven members, the largest Congregational Council assembled by an American church, gathered at

Plymouth Church. When these deliberations were completed, the delegates were unanimous in their judgment that Beecher had every right to be considered as an innocent and unfairly persecuted man.[92]

The venerable sage from Brooklyn Heights died on March 8, 1887. On the Sunday following Beecher's funeral at Plymouth Church, a large memorial service drew thousands representing all denominations and nationalities to Beecher's celebrated church, symbolizing the eloquent preacher's transcendence of ecclesiastical and theological barriers.[93] Chadwick commented:

> It would be quite impossible to overrate the influence of his work in bringing all insistence upon theological dogma into comparative contempt and all sectarian exclusiveness into a state of feebleness and incapacity that is the merest mockery of its once fat and riotous condition.[94]

Beecher preached eloquently a romantic Christianity that bound wounds, promised forgiveness, liberated spirits, and comforted the broken-hearted. "It reassured Americans," Clark emphasized, "that the universe was governed by moral laws, that Truth and Justice did exist, and that the American nation had a glorious future as the vehicle for God's chosen people."[95] Abbott evaluated Beecher's preaching:

> It is illustrative of the power of Mr. Beecher's spirit that the methods of the preacher and the spirit of the pulpit have undergone so great a change in the last half century. It is less ecclesiastical and more practical; it is less theological and more human; it is less devoted to building up a system and more devoted to building up men; there is, to use Mr. Beecher's classification, less ecclesiastical and dogmatic preaching, and more that is vital.96.

Parker described Beecher's revolutionary impact upon the sermon. "A sermon," he said,

> was no longer an analysis of words, a dreary creation and a distribution of particulars, a pedantic display of learned ignorance, an onslaught (tremendous in feebleness) upon absent doubters and dead infidels; nor was it a pious whine, an inoffensive platitude, an infantile homily, or a condiment for delicate souls. It was an amazing combination of philosophy, poetry, emotion and human enthusiasm - all centered in Christ, and all intended to bring men into right relations with the Father.97

And the illustrious Ingersoll designated Beecher as the greatest orator who stood within the pulpit's narrow curve and attempted a special service:

> He tried to civilize the Church, to harmonize the creeds, to soften pious hearts of stone, to take the fear from mothers' hearts, the chains of creed from every brain, to put the star of hope in every sky and over every grave.98

II

With extended historical perspective, Beecher's reputation becomes confirmed as America's most prominent nineteenth-century liberal preacher and the spokesman who gave New England Transcendentalism popularized expression. Beecher's renown rests partly upon his recognition as an especially effective public speaker who espoused his convictions and conclusions with unsurpassed eloquence. Abbott rightly realized that historians will regard Beecher as perhaps the post powerful preacher in American history, if not in the history of the Anglo-Saxon people.[99] Some have endorsed enthusiastically Abbott's conclusion that Beecher's distinguished career was without parallel within American church history. Barrows said that Beecher "made the platform of Plymouth Church a turning-point in history and a starting-point for humanity's better future."[100] Regarding the Brooklyn giant as a worthy successor of the ancient Athenian orators, Barrows called him "the Shakespeare of the pulpit"[101] and "the American Demosthenes."[102] Biographer Knox, like numerous writers, considered Beecher the greatest nineteenth-century orator and recorded that Beecher prided himself upon making Plymouth Church pulpit a free platform.[103]

Beyond his contemporary generation, Beecher secured an enduring acclaim. Beecher's eloquest speeches are studied critically by scholars who claim him as a persuasive pulpiteer who exerted enormous persuasion. Crocker concluded:

> Whereas the sermon had been concerned with the inculcation of a correct set of beliefs, he put the emphasis on the implications of religion in everyday living, and whereas the sermon had been argumentatove he helped to make them illustrative....
>
> Beecher held that whatever concerned the good of man was his subject matter; thus he was interested in the social implications of the Gospel, and in this he was ahead of such men as Walter Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden, and Harry F. Ward....
>
> The influence of his pulpit upon so many important men and movements of the nineteenth century has carved for Beecher a place in history.104

A comprehensive historical survey indicates that Beecher remains, through general agreement of historians, the greatest American preacher since Edwards and Whitefield and summarily suggests that

> The themes he developed with this eloquent power were those of most significance to his time: the transformation of the church from a guardian of the doorway to eternity into a guide to moral conduct, the liberation of theology from interpretation of the Scriptures to an exposition of divinity at work in evolution and in accordance with the natural laws of science, antislavery, temperance, and women's rights.105

These commendations acknowledging Beecher's effective preaching suggest that the Brooklyn clergyman was an innovative contributor during a transitional development within American religion. Seemingly new thoughts, a romanticized Christianity, communicated persuasively through eloquent preaching to an expanding, general audience, made Beecher America's preeminent nineteenth-century religious liberal.

Beecher was more than an articulate spokesman who enunciated the changing attitudes and fundamental values that were characteristic of middle-class citizens who provided the organizational skills and managerial expertise essential for growing commerce and expanding industry. Beecher aleviated the uneasiness and uncertainty that perplexed his countrymen who moved from countryside to cities, but he provided a new social ethos, consistent with American Victorian culture, that facilitated a growing pragmatism that prompted compromise, diffused discontent, and southed consciences. Beecher's formulation provided "average Americans" with a distinct identity and a sense of security by emphasizing self-reliance, nurturing public education and popular culture, nurturing economic security and social

responsibility, and championing fixed moral laws. Clark said:

> The new ethos was built around a core of religious beliefs that might best be labeled romantic Christianity. As espoused by Beecher, romantic Christianity was a religion of the heart, an appeal to the feelings and emotions that replaced the cold, formalistic evangelical theology of the previous generation and accepted the new theories of evolution and biblical criticism. Using the natural world as a source of inspiration, Beecher preached a new experiential Christianity that emphasized God's love for man and the availability of salvation for all....
>
> To this core of romantic Christianity, Beecher added a set of measures to reassure Americans that order and stability could be maintained in society....
>
> The final element in Beecher's social ethos was his belief in Darwinism.[106]

From an alternative, but especially significant perspective, Beecher's genuine cultural contribution stems from his development of a cultural ethos that not merely adapted Christianity, but that the Brooklyn preacher actually amalgamated to emergent strains pervading American religious thought and practice. Beecher blended New England Transcendentalism, that greatly modified the theology and preaching characteristic of the Evangelical and Unitarian pulpits, with the westernized frontier Methodism that mellowed a sterile rationality with feeling, passion, and sensitivity.[107] New England orthodoxy had become a cold rationalism that emphasized correct conviction, while warm-hearted Wesleyan Methodism encouraged a fervent heart-throb that warmed the human emotions. Beecher provided a humanized or secularized romantic Christianity that transformed the rigid Calvinism that depreciated human nature, nourished intellectual dogmatism, confined the promise of salvation, obscured the goodness of a loving God.

Beecher's distinctive religious philosophy shares with Transcendentalism a common epistemology that characterized romanticism. Beecher, like the New England Transcendentalists, emphasized God immanent or indwelling within Nature. Because that Divinity endowed individuals with intuitive faculties, each human might

experience direct perception or experimental confrontation with the Divinity. Emerson, who recognized keenly that corpse-cold rationalistic Unitarianism had reduced religious experience to antiseptic inquiry, has warned the Bostonian Brahamins that they severed themselves from God and humankind by depreciating the intuitive relationship between humans and the Divine. Although some Unitarians found convenience and comfort in concluding that man was too good for damnation, their intellectualism seemed too abstact and intagible for Americans who wanted a simple faith that addressed everyday experiences. New England Transcendentalists were ineffective communicators whose profound philosophical insights and spiritual experiences seemed arid and unreal. In revolting rightly against the theological formulations and institutional frameworks maintained by the Unitarians, Emerson's colleagues professed the individualism and perfectionism that made genuine religion seem artificial and unrealistic. Beecher's rhetoric provided a blending that McLaughlin recognized:

> Henry Ward Beecher's contribution to American religious development was to effect a workable marriage between the romantic, idealistic, individualistic aspects of transcendental philosophy and the conservative, well-ordered, institutional aspects of Christianity. While Emerson provided exceptional young people with a philosophy of self-governed, self-realizable freedom, Beecher offered the average, middle-class churchgoer a philosophy of (in his own words) "regulated Christian liberty." However, the starting point for both was the conviction that man must go through Nature to God.108

Clark concluded perceptively that Beecher's achievement was to unite for popular consumption two diverse streams of thought: the idealism of Contenental Romanticism with the individualistic gospel of evangelical Christianity.[109] However Beecher's philosophical speculation would have achieved considerably diminished social impact and influence had his preaching been ineffective.

Through eloquent preaching, Henry Ward Preaching revolutionized American religion. Chadwick, who served Brooklyn's Second Unitraian Church, said in 1887

that Beecher's part

> in that theological and religious revolution which has shorn the Calvinistic faith and practice of fifty years ago of more than half its terrors has been more prominent and of vaster energy and scope than that of any other man.110

Beecher's eminent biographer concluded that Beecher became so identified with the historic happenings that highlighted his generation that writing a comprehensive biography requires composing a general history about the United States during the nation's most critical and dramatic decades.[111] Beecher helped alter the atmosphere of religious thinking and living, becoming, in the process, the American who reportedly exerted the most profound and pervasive influence upon the profress of American moral, political, and religious thought.[112] As recent as 1927 Beecher's most critical biographer acknowledged that

> In 1813, when Henry Ward Beecher was born, Hell was perhaps the most enduring reality in the lives of over half the eight million people who made up this country.
>
> The Bible was not merely inspired, it was the literal word of Almighty God from cover to cover....
>
> In the seventy-four years that Beecher lived all of this changed.
>
> The significance of the man is not that he lived as spectator or even incidental participant through so many years during which a tremendous transformation took place in the outlook and the lives of men, but that the life and conduct of Henry Ward Beecher were both barometer and record of these changes.113

Hillis noted that although Beecher was born during an era pervaded with Calvinism, hell, and eternal punishment, he died a believer in evolution and "the one who, above all others, freed the minds of men from their old bondage to the Puritan God of fear, by preaching God as a compassionate father."[114] Barrows considered the Brooklyn orator as as representative as well as a leader of his generation, a child and a maker of his era; the eloquent spokesman helped connect the past with the future and became a bridge for the passage of multitudes.[115]

Plymouth's pulpiteer became a transitional facilator when a perplexed nouveaux riches grew spititually from orthodox Calvinism toward liberal religion, from rural agricultural living to suburban life-styles, from egalitarian simplicity toward conspicious consumption. Beecher functioned admirably as the high priest representing American liberal religion during the mid-nineteenth century and became, through popular preaching, the first American clergymen who secured a nationwide audience that acknowledged him as spokesman. "Beecher's great achievement," McLaughlin acknowledged, "was to amalgamate Romanticism, religion, and science - the epistemology of Kant, the Gospel of Jesus, the theology of Spencer. And then as the final binding tie for those various elements, he superimposed a firm faith in the national destiny of Anglo-Saxon America."[116] Beecher nurtured Americans' intellect by encouraging respect for education and science, while preaching to the human heart a message that affirmed Christianity. Beecher harmonized romantic Christianity with experimental science, not through metaphysical speculation but through emotional sensitivity. McLaughlin called Beecher's novel Norwood the death certificate for Calvinism among middle-class Americans and the first fully-developed liberal Protestant statement that appeared in popular form.[117] From an historical theological perspective, Beecher typlified the fundamental change that happened in New England between the revolutionary and civil wars, when the "covenant" theological theme became replaced by a "moral government" theme.[118] This alteration, directly promoted by Beecher, facilitated the emergent optimism and sentimental moralism that some called Victorian. Choosing to reformulate a pertinent Christian persuasion addressed to his contemporaries, Beecher helped prevent religious decline by promoting a social activism that antedated the Social Gospel movement.[119]

Henry Ward Beecher exerted powerful and persistent persuasion upon American culture as his religious principles became pragmatic practices, innovations that were incorporated within institutional Christianity. Beecher's concepts about religious reality were expressed through worship, architecture, and preaching. Inaugurating a new beginning, congregational singing during the worship service became a customary practice at Plymouth Church. When Beecher's musical anthology called Plymouth Collection was published, perhaps less than a dozen American congregations were supplied with hymnals for congregational singing.[120] Not since the Jeffersonian Republicans had silenced the Federalist pulpits by accusing clergymen with meddling in politics had a minister dared so dramatically to address political themes from the pulpit. But Brooklyn's Beecher spoke about every significant political and social question and campaigned for presidential candidates. Beecher was eccumenical before eccumenism. The preacher harmonized spiritual reality with everyday experiences, helping to dispel the mistaken divisions that arbitrarily separated the "sacred" from the "secular." Beecher examplified the thoughtful, far-sighted clergyman when he became one of the first ministers to accept "evolution" and attempt a reconciliation between science and religion. Beecher's enthusiastic endorsement of evolution shook theological establishments to their fundamental foundations.[121] In 1860 the official organ of Boston Unitarianism, the Christian Examiner, hailed Beecher as a leader of liberal religious thought who opposed Calvinism.[122] By redefining revelation, Beecher expanded the sources of religious knowledge to include the entirety of human knowledge, information, and understanding. By redefining conversion from an instantaneous trauma that guaranteed eternal salvation to a gradual growth and development, Beecher encouraged education and popular culture. Beecher contributed

toward a liberal Protestant Christianity that accepted the relativity of religious truth and the significance of comparative religion, not because Beecher claimed that Christianity's essential truths were discerned among the world's various religions but because he concluded that religious convictions and conclusions are subject to the "laws of development" that affect human life and society.[123] When New England evangelicals were persistently puritanical and antiaesthetic, Beecher enriched living by attending the theatre, drinking wine, praising art and music, and enjoying literature.[124] Beecher promoted nondenominational religious journalism when he determined that his newspaper, the Christian Union, would have an editorial policy broad as Christianity and a free from sectarianism as the Sermon on the Mount.[125] Beecher believed that Plymouth Church was the first American church where flowers were placed on the platform every Sunday morning;[126] floral decorations enhanced the Sunday sanctuary service and became an early tradition.[127]

These innovations that distinguished Plymouth Church spread to other congregations and became visible evidences of Beecher's liberal religion. Theoretical assumptions undergirded these external evidences. By emphasizing ethical behavior rather than spiritual conformity, Beecher eliminated the conventional distinctions between secular and sacred concerns when he changed the focus of religion from the world-to-come to the here-and-now.[128] Like others who promoted the Social Gospel movement, Beecher redefined and reshaped the essential tenents of Christianity by emphasizing that religion atems from God's gift of love, that the natural world provides a reflection of God's immutable laws, and that the family constitutes the appropriate agency for furthering Protestantism.[129]

Henry Ward Beecher's enormous enduring contribution enriching American liberal religion should never obscure the Brooklyn preacher's charismatic personality and compelling ethos. Comprehending Beecher's historical achievement and theological significance entails understanding the man himself.

Among the pronounced personality characteristics was Beecher's compassionate sensitivity toward the race's common humanity and earthly nature! Biographers persistently emphasize how Beecher sustained hearty fellow-feeling with his associates.[130] Abbott explained that Beecher enjoyed all sorts of persons because they interested him strongly and because he found them a fundamental source of information.[131] Beecher's essential interest was persons and not theories, life and not reflections upon living. Preeminantely oriented toward individuals, Nature, and the sacred scriptures, Beecher learned directly from humans what some comprehend from reading printed pages. Abbott stressed that Beecher revered the potential divinity within every person and attempted to actualize that divinity.[132] In an outstanding analysis examining Beecher's effective preaching, Abbott said:

> This human sympathy can only come from a nature which includes in its breadth and generosity all classes of men, the poor and the rich alike, with whom he joys in their gladness and weeps in their sorrow....
>
> This human sympathy, and the value which he places upon the human soul and its great interests, is the quality of Mr. Beecher's life and preaching which has, above all other characteristics, gained for him his renown as a preacher for and to the people.133

What psychologists designate as empathy developed as Beecher interacted with his fellows, sharing everyday experiences.

> His school was not alone that of the seminary or the college, but the open fields, the blassoming flowers, the printed page, the garrulous neighbor, his friend, his acquaintance, his creditor, his debtor, his butcher, his shoemaker, all taught him something.
>
> ...wherever men worked and toiled and thought and grumbled, he went to study, to read and to form for himself weapons with which to fight in the interests of a common humanity.134

Beecher's philosophical speculation and scholarly endeavors never eclipses his fundamental interest in individuals. Stowe explained that he engaged in conversation stage-drivers, ferrymen, longshoremen, carpenters, and laborers just as he did scholars, preachers, business men, and other professionals.[135] Abbott claimed that the Brooklyn orator was more interested in preaching to sinners than saints, to skeptics than believers, to the world than the church.[136] Barrows concluded that the chief element in Beecher's effective preaching was his ability to project himself into other's lives and alanyzing their motivations.[137] Beecher's friendships enbraced diverse persons and encircled humanity.[138]

Beecher's compassion towards humans consistently examplified his ecumenism. Beecher was authentically ecumenical before most ministers spelled the word correctly. "He never bombarded the Jews," Griswold emphasized, "he left the heathen to their normal guardians, he avoided a decision of questions raised by the Garden of Eden, and left the sheep and the goats of ancient history to follow the call of their shepherd."[139] Swedenborgians, spiritualists, Quakers, and Episcopalians were among those who became members at Plymouth Church. Beecher avowed:

> I own the Episcopal Church: it is mine. I own the Presbyterian Church. There is not a good thing in it that I do not own. I own the Methodist Church. And I will go to that church when I have a mind to. I own the Baptist Church. I own the Lutheran Church. I own the Unitarian and Universalist Churches, if they have good ministers in them. I own the Swedenborgian Church.[140]

Beecher emphatically acknowledged that individuals might be better or worse than their professed theological creed; that anyone who behaved like a Christian should be regarded as Christian without regard to their church or creed; that theologians have quarreled about numerous questions upon which they were ignorant; and that behavior and not professed creed constitute the test for Christian experience because profession produces no demonstrable influence upon conduct.[141]

Members within numerous sects concluded that they possessed something in common with the Brooklyn minister.[142] Beecher practiced his professed ecumenism:

> On Sabbath days, in London, I attend services at Westminster, at St. Paul's, and particularly at the Temple Church. Why? Because I am an Episcopalian? Yes, I am. I am a Presbyterian, too; and I am a Methodist, and a Baptist, and a Swedenborgian. I am everything that has any good in it. 143.

The Communication invitation pronounced at Plymouth Church evidence the non-denominational non-sectarian congregation:

> Christian brethren, in heaven you are known by the name of Christ. On earth, for convenience' sake, you are known by the name of Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Congregationalists, and the like. Let me speak the language of heaven, and call you, simply, Christians. Whoever of you has known the name of Christ, and feels Christ's life beating within him, is invited to remain, and sit with us at the table of the Lord.144

Beecher envisioned a universal community in which "there shall be a common people, sitting in a commonwealth, having a common Bible, and common peace and joy in a common brotherhood."[145]

Appreciating Beecher's theology and ministry necessitates understanding Beecher as a person, and what provides an immensely important insight into Beecher is the spiritual experience that transformed the preacher's early life and almost determined his religious philosophy and eventual ministry. Again Abbott provides the perceptive conclusion:

> The beginning of Mr. Beecher's real life was a spiritual experience which he himself has graphically described. I can find no exact date for this experience; but the opening sentence of his description implies that it occurred after his graduation from Amherst College; and in his address to the London ministers in 1886 he refers to it as having taken place in the Ohio woods, and "when he had studied theology," evidently therefore during his seminary course.
>
> "I was a child of teaching and prayer..."
>
> To the interpretation of this vision and the interpretation of the life which it begot in him he thenceforth gave himself. Was this vision true? Was this vision of value? By the answer to these two questions his character and career must be measured.146

Abbott's emphasis upon this significant spiritual experience seems supported strongly by Hillis' explanation that

> The greatest event of his Cincinnati period was not his father's trial for heresy, or any experience with slavery, but the change which occurred in his own religious thinking, traceable in part to the influence of Calvin Stowe, a gentle mystic who taught Greek literature at Lane, and who was to marry Harriet Beecher.
>
> "I was a child of teaching and prayer," writes Mr. Beecher in a passage long familiar for its evocation of a great experience. "I was reared in a household of faith....I shall never forget the feelings with which I walked forth that May morning. The golden pavements will never feel to my feet as then the grass felt to them; and the singing of the birds in the woods - for I roamed in the woods - was cacophonous to the sweet music of my thoughts; and there were no forms in the universe hich seemed to me graceful enough to represent the Being, a conception of whose character had just dawned on my mind."
>
> Of the genuineness of this experience, and the transcendent change it wrought in him, there can be no doubt.147

Beecher's especially significant religious experience, accepted by these respected biographers as crucial in the eloquent preacher's life, connect the Broklyn clergyman with the Transcendentalist tradition. Stemming directly from Beecher's immediate experience, the clergyman's religious philosophy and famous ministry became expressions honoring the inspiration and influence imparted by that seminary event. Not by the philosophical assertion that affirms a common epistemology but through a seemingly identical spiritual experience, Beecher became the spokesman through whom the pronouncements articulated by Channing, Emerson, and Parker secured the widest, most comprehensive expression. Abbott stated that Beecher would have been an ineffective preacher had he not been essentially a mystic who possessed "the power of seeing immediately and directly the invisible and the eternal."[148] Beecher believed that everyone can carry their wants immediately to God, without intervention from a mediary; but Beecher's personal mystical experience, especially the transforming event that happened at Lane, equipped Beecher to serve as a priest "interpreting men's deeper wants to themselves, and so acting as their interpreter in declaring those deeper wants to him alone who can provide

for them."[149] Beecher examplified that through "personal religious experience in Nature, men could overcome the doubts fostered by the waning of faith in Calvinist dogma, Lockean psychology, Paley's natural theology, the philosophy of the Scottish Common Sense School, and the literal infallibility of the Bible."[150] Enormously greater than abstract theological pronouncements, Beecher's religious philosophy, stemming from profound personal experience, demonstrated that "imagination is more important than intellect, the heart than the head, and that men are governed not so much by their rational faculties as by their feelings."[151] Beecher never conceptualized communion with the Divine as an estatic lolt from the blue or a mystical disolving of self, but as a profound inner experience:

> The way to find God was not through microscopes and telescopes but through the inward eye of reflection and the outward light of setting suns. For God had so constructed the human soul that it was capable of perceiving Him directly.

Although primary emphasis was placed upon personal religious experience, Beecher, more than many contemporary clergymen, contended that theological speculation upon religious experience should be communicated in philosophi al categories consistent with experimental, empirical science. Although Beecher copied no Transcendentalist, he remained a genuine Christian Transcendentalist whose experiential communion with God in Nature required the prerequisit endowments of sensation, reason, imagination, and intuition. By repudiating the sterile speculative dimension pervading Calvinism and the literal infallibility of the Bible, Beecher discovered Divinity through Nature and became the nation's greatest preacher who successfully reached an expanded national audience:

> But I would prefer to describe him, as probably he would himself, as a creator of spiritual myths, a poet of the popular religion, who managed for a time to capture and inspire an audience that the more profound literary and religious figures of his age - Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Hawthorne, Melville, Bushnell - were unable (often unwilling) to cater to.

> These men saw deeper than he, and their works still have meaning today. But Beecher had a different sociological function: that of contemporary interpreter, popularizer, prophet of the ordinary. A man never ahead or behind his time but always perfectly in step with it.153

Although Beecher's Transcendentalism stemmed directly from personal spiritual experience, his enduring contribution assumed tangible and intangible expression. So harsh a critic as Hibben concludes that Beecher's Yale Lectures on Preaching stand out, sound and enduring, beyond anything else from Beecher's prodigious contribution.[154] Abbott maintained that Beecher's Yale Lectures are the most important volume bequeathed by the Brooklyn pastor and the one most likely to permanently and directly influence the Church.[155] The incentive for delivering this distinguished lecture series came during 1871, when Henry W. Sage, a member of Plymouth Church and a personal friend of Beecher's, contributed the essential finances to establish the annual lectureship. Henry Ward Beecher became the first person to hold the lectureship that bore his deceased father's name. Not merely did Beecher's lectures provide the most honored statement summarizing preaching ph losophy; these lectures provide an excellent illustration of Beecher's many sidedness and diverse interests.[156] Beecher indicated in his lectures a concept about preaching that his ministry examplified:

> The ideal of a true Christian preacher...is this, to take the great truths of the Lord Jesus Christ's teachings, and the love of God to the human race, and make them a part of his own personal experience, so that when he speaks to men it shall not be he alone that speaks, but God in him....
>
> You must have a heart so alive and full of genial, sympathizing love that you feel yourself related to everything on the globe that lives and has the power of enjoyment....
>
> No man can deal with the hearts of men as he ought, unless he has the sympathy which is given by love.157

Subsequently Beecher described oratory as "the art of influencing conduct with the truth set home by all the resources of the living man."[158] Through precept and practice, Beecher demonstrated effective preaching as a personal expression of a great truth through an abiding love to humankind.

Beecher championed freedom and responsibility for preaching. "The way to keep the church alive," he advised, "is to give liberty of prophesying to all its members."[159] The Brooklyn minister maintained that "to subject personal liberty in the pulpit to official repression, is to close the channel by which God sends light into the world."[160] Beecher stressed that a divine sanction sustains preaching:

> Any man that has the love of Jesus, and the power to preach the love of Jesus, is the New Testament preacher, but not the ecclesiastical preacher-not the preacher of the church that bears the name of Christ.
>
> I hold that every man who knows Christ Jesus, and loves Him, and loves his fellow-men, not only has a right to preach what he is, and what Christ has done for him, and what life, and life eternal, is, but has a right, if he chooses, to gather those to whom he preaches into a brotherhood, and call them a church; and if he chooses to dispense the bread and wine to them, that is the communion of the Lord's Supper. Though never priest saw him, nor minister touched him, he is ordained, and is authorized to administer the sacrament.161

Eloquently was preachers and preaching described. The minister, he indicated,

> is to act directly upon the reason, the conscience and the affections of men. It is his business to bring men from wickedness to righteousness by the presentation of truth; to bring them from indifference to moral sensibility; from gladness to a perpetual consciousness of God....It has this pecularity, which separates it widely from all other influences, that it is a <u>personal</u> influence. It is not the influence of truth alone, abstractly, but it is the influence of the truth of God, as it is made a living truth by the emotions and the speaking of a man,-reduced to human conditions and influences....It brings to bear the life, the experience and moral influence of one man upon another, and what a man preaches ought to be what the man is....The soul that dwells in the love of God is itself a gospel, quite aside from ministerial functions, and it is the best argument, and the only example.162

Beecher realized the importance of personal influence within preaching, but he never substituted rhetorical techniques for substantive content. Sensitive toward an audience, the eloquent clergyman emphasized listener analysis and adaptation:

> Ye are to be fishers of men; and as men study the nature of fish-the pout, the eel nestling in the mud, the fierce pickerel, the shining trout, the gamy black bass, the salmon or the deep sea fish-and adapt their mode of fishing to the nature of the fish desired to be caught;

> so men are to study the mode of influence of one soul upon another, in such a way as to make the truth which they would lay before men, and into the practice of which they would draw them, efficacious and successful.... A man's truth is like bait on the hook: it must be such a bait as fish will take, and it must be on such a hook as will attract the fish.163

Emphasizing the spirit of preaching and content within sermonic discourse, he drew upon I Corinthians when he concluded:

> Paul would say that a man may be a perfect orator, an exquisite poet and lyrist, and yet be like a drum that makes the loudest sound and is the emptiest instrument in all the band; so is the man that has not love, no matter what else he has got.164

Footnotes

1 Robert G. Ingersoll, Beecher Memorial: Contemporaneous Tributes To The Memory of Henry Ward Beecher Compiled and edited by Edward W. Bok (Brooklyn, New York: Privately Printed, 1887), p. 28

2 Joseph Howard, Jr. Life of Henry Ward Beecher, The Eminent Pulpit and Platform Orator (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers, 1887), p. 42.

3 Paxton Hibben, Henry Ward Beecher: An American Portrait (New York: George H. Doran and Comapny, 1927), p. 30.

4 John Henry Barrows, Henry Ward Beecher: The Shakespeare of the Pulpit (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1893), p. 31.

5 William C. Beecher, Samuel Scoville, and Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher, A Biography of Reverend Henry Ward Beecher (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1888), pp. 614-616.

6 Lyman Beecher Stowe, Saints, Sinners and Beechers (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1934), p. 306.

7 Hibben, An American Portrait, 30.

8 Lyman Abbott and S. B. Halliday, Henry Ward Beecher: A Sketch of His Career (Hartford, Connecticut: American Publishing Company, 1887), p. 31.

9 Hibben, An American Portrait, 39.

10 Howard, The Eminent Pulpit and Platform Orator, p. 42.

11 William G. McLaughlin, The Meaning of Henry Ward Beecher (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 15.

12 Barrows, The Shakespeare, 61.

13 Lyman Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1903), p. 42

14 T.J. Ellinwood, ed. Autobiographical Reminessences of Henry Ward Beecher (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1898), p. 46. See Barrows, Shakespeare, 66-67.

15 Abbott and Halliday, Sketch, 134-135.

16 Stowe, Saints, Sinners and Beechers, 244.

17 Clifford E. Clark, Jr. Henry Ward Beecher: Spokesman for a Middle Class America (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978), p. 16.

18 Barrows, Shakespeare, 53.

19 Clark, Spokesman, 31-32.

20 Abbott and Halliday, Sketch, 76.

21 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 111-112.

22 Clark, Spokesman, 71.

23 Constance Mayfield Rourke, Trumpets of Jubilee (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), pp. 159-160.

24 Hibben, An American Portrait, 105.

25 Clark, Spokesman, 54-57.

26 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 63.

27 Barrows, Shakespeare, 103.

28 Barrows, Shakespeare, 83.

29 W.C. Griswold, Life of Henry Ward Beecher (Centerbrook, Connecticut: W.C. Griswold and Company, 1887), p. 32.

30 Barrows, Shakespeare, 107-108. See Stowe, Saints, Sinners and Beechers, 271.

31 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 81.

32 Rourke, Trumpets of Jubilee, 165.

33 Clark, Spokesman, 88.

34 Stowe, Saints, Sinners and Beechers, 275.

35 Clark, Spokesman, 93.

36 Hibben, An American Portrait, 126.

37 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 98. See Hibben, An American Portrait, 161.

38 Clark, Spokesman, 193.

39 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 98-99.

40 McLaughlin, Meaning, 27.

41 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 304.

42 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 304-305.

43 Clark, Spokesman, 234.

44 Barrows, Shakespeare, 416.

45 Barrows, Shakespeare, 482.

[46] Clark, Spokesman, 127.

[47] Clark, Spokesman, 234-235.

[48] Rourke, Trumpets of Jubilee, 236.

[49] Frank W. Gunsaulus, "Henry Ward Beecher as an Orator," in Henry Ward Beecher As His Friends Saw Him (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1904), p. 43.

[50] James Leonard Corning, Sr. "Personal Reflections on Henry Ward Beecher," an address delivered at Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, March 1, 1903, p. 18.

[51] Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 24 and 57.

[52] Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 351. See Barrows, Shakespeare, 132.

[53] Barrows, Shakespeare, 130.

[54] Barrows, Shakespeare, 475-476; 491.

[55] Clark, Spokesman, 122.

[56] Joseph Parker, "Henry Ward Beecher," an eulogy delivered at the Academy of Music, Brooklyn, October 4, 1887, pp. 16-19.

[57] Lyman Abbott, ed. Best Thoughts of Henry Ward Beecher with Biographical Sketch (New York: H.S. Goodspeed and Company, 1893), p. 315.

[58] Henry Ward Beecher, Evolution and Religion (New York: Fords, Howard and Hulbert, 1885), I, p. 137.

[59] Abbott, Best Thoughts of Henry Ward Beecher, 216-217.

[60] Beecher, Evolution and Religion, 126.

[61] Abbott, Best Thoughts of Henry Ward Beecher, 189.

62 Abbott, Best Thoughts of Henry Ward Beecher, 251.

63 Abbott, Best Thoughts of Henry Ward Beecher, 15-16.

64 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 155 and 192.

65 Rourke, Trumpets of Jubilee, 182.

66 Clark, Spokesman, 155.

67 Barrows, Shakespeare, 271.

68 Abbott and Halliday, Sketch, 184.

69 Barrows, Shakespeare, 487.

70 Griswold, Life of Henry Ward Beecher, 40. See Rourke, Trumpets of Jubilee, 135.

71 Hibben, An American Portrait, 194.

72 Barrows, Shakespeare, 347.

73 Clark, Spokesman, 158.

74 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 261.

75 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 374.

76 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 220.

77 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 222.

78 Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 222.

79 Hibben, An American Portrait, 177.

80
Richard Dwight Hillis, "Henry Ward Beecher," in A Church in History (Brooklyn, New York: Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims, 1949), pp. 45-47.

81
Griswold, Life of Henry Ward Beecher, 36-37.

82
Clark, Spokesman, 131.

83
Clark, Spokesman, 136.

84
Rourke, Trumpets of Jubilee, 182.

85
Barrows, Shakespeare, 350.

86
Stowe, Saints, Sinners and Beechers, 293.

87
Rourke, Trumpets of Jubilee, 187.

88
Barrows, Shakespeare, 366.

89
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 322.

90
Corning, "Personal Reflections of Henry Ward Beecher," 20-21.

91
Hibben, An American Portrait, 246.

92
Barrows, Shakespeare, 403.

93
Stowe, Saints, Sinners and Beechers, 334.

94
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 418.

95
Clark, Spokesman, 275.

96
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 366.

97
Parker, "Henry Ward Beecher," 17.

98
Ingersoll, Beecher Memorial, 31-32.

99
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 373.

100
Barrows, Shakespeare, 366.

101
Barrows, Shakespeare, 1-14.

102
Barrows, Shakespeare, 330.

103
Thomas W. Knox, Life and Work of Henry Ward Beecher (Hartford, Connecticut: The Hartford Publishing Company, 1887), pp. 284-287.

104
Lionel Crocker, "Henry Ward Beecher," A History and Criticism of American Public Address Edited by William Norwood Brigance (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), pp. 267, 283, and 292. See Lionel Crocker, The Rhetorical Theory of Henry Ward Beecher (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934).

105
Robert T. Oliver, History of Public Speaking in America (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1965), p. 379. See Robert Elwood Burns, "A Development of Criteria for Effective Preaching from an Analysis of the Preaching of Henry Ward Beecher" (Unpublished STD dissertation, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, 1975).

106
Clark, Spokesman, 3-4.

107
Barrows, Shakespeare, 521.

108
McLaughlin, Meaning, 68.

109
Clark, Spokesman, 84.

110
Ingersoll, Beecher Memorial, 28.

111
John W. Chadwick, "Henry Ward Beecher," a sermon preached at the Second Unitarian Church, Brooklyn, May 1887, p. 235.

112
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, xii. See Abbott and Halliday, Sketch, v.

113
Hibben, An American Portrait, vii.

114
Hillis, "Henry Ward Beecher," 6.

115
Barrows, Shakespeare, 523-524.

116
McLaughlin, Meaning, 4 and 243.

117
McLaughlin, Meaning, 56 and 85.

118
John Goodell, "The Triumph of Moralism in New England Piety: A Study of Lyman Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Henry Ward Beecher," (Unpublished dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, 1976).

119
Clark, Spokesman, 136 and 194.

120
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 91.

121
Hillis, A Church in History, 63-65.

122
McLaughlin, Meaning, 41-42.

123
McLaughlin, Meaning, 81.

124
McLaughlin, Meaning, 132.

125
Abbott and Halliday, Sketch, 129.

126
Beecher, Evolution and Religion, 16.

127
Barrows, Shakespeare, 150.

128
Clark, Spokesman, 61.

129
Clark, Spokesman, 85-86.

130
Beecher, Scoville, and Beecher, Biography, 597.

131
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 62 and 114.

132
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 128.

133
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 69-71.

134
Howard, The Eminent Pilpit and Platform Ortaor, 8.

135
Stowe, Saints, Sinners and Beechers, 302.

136
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 58.

137
Barrows, Shakespeare, 501.

138
Stowe, Saints, Sinners and Beechers, 334.

139
Griswold, Life of Henry Ward Beecher, 29. See McLaughlin, Meaning, 258.

140
Ellinwood, Autobiographical Reminessences of Henry Ward Beecher, 184.

141
Abbott and Halliday, Sketch, 93-94.

142
Beecher, Scovile, Beecher, Biography, 612.

143
Ellinwood, Autobiographical Reminessences of Henry Ward Beecher, 150.

144
Abbott, Best Thoughts of Henry Ward Beecher, 162.

145
Abbott, Best Thoughts of Henry Ward Beecher, 181.

146
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 1.

147
Hillis, A Church in History, 11.

148
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 128-129.

149
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 132.

150
McLaughlin, Meaning, 4.

151
McLaughlin, Meaning, 32.

152
McLaughlin, Meaning, 54.

153
McLaughlin, Meaning, 258-259.

154
Hibben, An American Portrait, 274-275.

155
Abbott, Henry Ward Beecher, 327.

156
Howard, The Eminent Pulpit and Platform Orator, 457.

157
Henry Ward Beecher, Yale Lectures on Preaching (New York: J.B. Ford and Company, 1872), I, pp. 7, 243 and 248.

158
Henry Ward Beecher, Oratory (Philadelphia: The National School of Oratory, 1886), p. 20.

159
Henry Ward Beecher, "The Pulpit of Today," Plymouth Pulpit, VII (1884), p. 375.

160
Beecher, "The Pulpit of Today," 376.

161
Henry Ward Beecher, "The Apostolic Theory of Preaching," Plymouth Pulpit, II (1869), pp. 203-205.

162
Beecher, "The Pulpit of Today," 367-369.

163
Beecher, "The Pulpit of Today," 370.

164
Henry Ward Beecher, "True Preaching," a sermon preached in the Drill Hall, Carlisle, England, on August 22, 1886, p. 19.